

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

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INFO AMCONSUL UDORN

AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 17058

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TH

SUBJECT: THE LAW AND GOVERNOR PRAMUAN

REF: A. BANGKOK 16351 B. BANGKOK 16744

SUMMARY: POLICE BUOHRAL PRACHUAB SUNTHARANGKUL, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE THAI NATIONAL POLICE DEPARTMENT (TNPD), RECENTLY ANNOUNCED IN A PRESS CONFERENCE THAT THE POLICE WOULD EXPEDITE INVESTIGATIONS ON OUTSTANDING CORRUPTION AND INFLUENCE CASES. POLICE LATER ISSUED ARREST WARRANTS FOR KORAT GOVERNOR PRAMUAN SATTHATHIP AND THREE POLICE OFFICERS IN THE EIGHT MONTH OLD MURDER CASE. PRAMUAN HAS BEEN RELIEVED OF HIS DUTIES AND ATTACHED TO THE INTERIOR MINISTRY TO FACILITATE THE POLICE INVESTIGWXION. END SUMMARY

1. POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL PRACHUAB SUNTHARANGKUL, RECENTLY PROMOTED TO FULL GENERAL, ANNOUNCED IN AN OCTOBER 22 PRESS CONFERENCE THAT HE HAD ORDERED POLICE AUTHORITIES TO EXPEDITE THEIR INVESTIGATIONS OF THE MAJOR CORRUPTION AND INF PENCE#SCANDALS THAT HAVE

PLAGUED THE GOVERNMENT FOR MONTHS. PRACHUAB IS OBVIOUSLY UNDER PRESSURE TO RESURRECT THE MORALE OF THE POLICE AND ENHANCE ITS PUBLIC IMAGE.

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2. ONE OF THE MUCH DISCUSSED CORRUPTION CASES CONCERNS THE ALLDFLD

INVOLVEMENT OF GOVERNOR PRAMUAN SATTHATHIP IN THE MURDER OF A ROI ET PROVINCE MILITIAMAN. EVEN FORMER PRIME MINISTER THANOM KITTIKACHORN BOWED TO PUBLIC PRESSURE TO LAUNCH AN INQUIRY INTO THE CASE (REF A). AFTER RECEIVING THE RESULTS OF THE POLICE INVESTIGATION, POLICE DIRECTOR GENERAL PRACHUAB REPORTEDLY SIGNED AN ARREST WARRANT FOR PRAMUAN AND THREE POLICE OFFICERS ON OCTOBER 31.

3. DEPUTY PROVINCIAL POLICE COMMISSIONER MAJOR GENERAL PHAIYONG PATIPIMPAKOM SERVED THE WARRANT ON GOVERNOR PRAMUAN OCTOBER 30. THE WARRANT CHARGES HIM WITH NEGLIGENCE AND ABUSE OF DUTY, A CONSIDERABLY LESSER CHARGE THAN ACCOMPLICE TO MURDER WHICH IS THE WAY THE VENACULAR PRESS HAS PLAYED THE CASE. INTERIOR MINISTER KAMOL WANNAPJFHA ANNOUNCED NOVEMBER 1 THAT PRAMUAN WAS RELIEVED OF HIS DUTIES TO FACILITATE THE POLICE INVESTIGATION.

4. POLICE LT. COLONEL PRAT SUWANNAKOM, ROI ET DEPUTY PROVINCIAL POLICE CHIEF AT THE TIME OF THE MURDER; POLICE CAPTAIN SUNTHORN VISETMORA, A PHON THONG DEPUTY DISTRICT OFFICER; AND CAPTAIN CHUL MUANGPON ALSO RECEIVED WARRANTS FOR THEIR ROLE IN THE CRIME AND ITS COVER-UP. SAMUT SURRENDERED TO GENERAL CHAIYONG AT POLICE REGION IV HEADQUARTERS ON OCTOBER 31 AND THE OTHER SUSPECTS ARE EXPECTED TO FOLLOW SUIT.

5. COMMENT: PRACHUAB IS TAKING THE LEAD IN PRESSING THE ROI ET MURDER CASE IN ORDER TO REBUILD THE PRESTIGE OF THE POLICE. WHILE THE COURT CASE MAY BE TIME CONSUMING, THE GOVERNMENT'S CHANCES OF CONVICTION ARE ENHANCED BY PLACING THE LESSER, BUT MORE EASILY PROVEN, CHARGES AGAINST THESE OFFICIALS. ACTION ON THIS CASE WILL HELP DEFLECT CRITICISMS THAT THE SANYA GOVERNMENT IS RELUCTANT TO MOVE AGAINST THE OUTSTANDING CORRUPTION AND INFLUENCE CASES WHICH TARNISHED THANOM'S IMAGE.

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NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED. WILL BE SERVICED ON REQUEST.

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